

GARY LOCKE
Governor



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**Gov. Gary Locke Signs Agreement for
Federal Disaster Relief from October Floods**

CAMP MURRAY – Nov. 11, 2003 – Gov. Gary Locke today signed an agreement that begins federal disaster assistance for 15 counties hardest hit by severe flooding last month.

Locke signed the agreement with John Pennington, regional director for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), at the State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray.

"Despite all the damage and destruction, our communities have vowed to rebuild," Locke said. "Today, we've taken a big step in that direction – offering help and hope to those who need it most. We will be setting up recovery centers in the hardest hit communities of our state."

Pennington said, "This partnership will enable FEMA and the state of Washington to better serve those affected by this disaster. We have already received registrations from hundreds of disaster victims and expect to send out the first assistance checks in a matter of days."

Locke sent a letter to President Bush Oct. 28 requesting federal assistance for Chelan, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Mason, Okanogan, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston and Whatcom counties. The president issued the disaster declaration for those counties on Nov. 7.

The agreement Locke signed today paves the way for federal disaster assistance for damage caused by severe storms and flooding Oct. 15-23. Residents in the 15 affected counties who suffered damage are encouraged to register for assistance by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired. The toll-free numbers will operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week until further notice.

As an initial step to serve those most heavily impacted, state and federal disaster recovery officials plan to set up disaster recovery centers in both Skagit and Snohomish counties. Most likely locations are Granite Falls in Snohomish County, and Mount Vernon and the upper Skagit River area in Skagit County. Officials also plan to travel to several of the affected counties and provide on-site disaster registration and information.

The agreement allows for two kinds of federal assistance. The first is for Individuals and Household Programs (IHP), providing money for families and individuals affected by the flooding. The second form of assistance is for the Hazard and Mitigation Program. This allows for a percentage of disaster assistance funds to promote mitigation projects in local jurisdictions.

The governor also requested disaster assistance loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency to help affected businesses, farmers and ranchers.

On March 1, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages Citizen Corps, the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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